REMARKS

Status of the claims:

With the above amendment, claim 1 has been amended. Claims 1-7 are pending and ready for further action on the merits. Support for the amendment to claim 1 can be found at page 5, line 19 *et seq*. Reconsideration is respectfully requested in light of the following remarks.

Rejections under 35 USC §103

Claims 1-4, 6, and 7 have been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over EP '191 (EP 118 191 A1).

Claims 1-4 have been rejected under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP '593 (JP 10-072593 (abstract)).

These rejections are traversed for the following reasons.

Present Invention

The present invention is characterized by including the particle group obtained by spray-drying a slurry and is unexpectedly improved in view of the high solubility. A surfactant may be carried on the particle group. When the particle group is introduced into water at 5°C, stirred for 60 seconds, and passed through a standard screen that has an opening of 7.4 μm as described in JIS Z 8801, the degree of dissolution is 90% as calculated by the following formula (1)

Degree of dissolution (%)=[1-(T/S)] x 100 (1). In this formula S is a weight of the particle group introduced, T is a dry weight in grams of a residue from the particle group remaining on the standard screen through which an aqueous solution obtained under the following stirring conditions has been sifted. 1 g of the particle group is introduced into 1 L hard water in a 1 L beaker with an inner diameter of 105 mm and stirred at a revolution rate of 800 rpm with a stirrer, wherein 1 L hard water is defined as 71.2 mg $CaCO_3$/L water, with a molar ratio of Ca/Mg of 7/3, and the stirrer has a stirrer length of 35 mm and a diameter of 8 mm.

Disclosure of Ingram '191

Ingram '191 discloses in an Example that a detergent and a specified polyol are carried on fiber of nylon. A sheet of detergent can be produced through solidification of the polyol. A substrate is provided on a single side of the sheet. The substrate may be water soluble as shown at page 24, lines 13 to 22.

Disclosure of JP '593

JP '593 discloses a bleach having a water-soluble substrate on both sides thereof. JP '593 fails to disclose or suggest

anything about the particle group obtained by spray drying a slurry.

Removal of the Rejection over Ingram '191 and JP '593

Neither Ingram '191 nor JP '593 disclose or suggest the solubility of the particle group of the instantly claimed invention. Moreover, Ingram '191 and JP '593 fail to disclose or suggest a particle group obtained by spray-drying a slurry. Ingram '191 also fails to disclose or suggest water-soluble substrates provided on both sides of the laundry layer.

Applicants acknowledge that process limitations are generally not read into a product absent a showing that the products produced are different. Accordingly, Applicants submit that "spray-drying a slurry containing at least one member selected from the group consisting of a water-soluble organic material, and /or a detergent particle group comprising a surfactant carried on said particle group" provides a product that is different and superior from that disclosed in EP '191 and JP '593.

First, the claimed sheet structure has a structure that is distinct from either EP '191 or JP '593 in the particle group or particle. In particular, spray-drying the slurry results in the water-soluble salts being located around the surface of the particles. This leads to more rapid solubility in water than a

slurry, which is not spray-dried, which is one of the desired traits of the instant invention.

Moreover, by spray-drying the slurry, the particles of the instant invention have air voids/pockets, which also leads to more rapid solubility when dissolved in water. Further, air bubbles result from these air pockets when the sheet is dissolved in washing water. Please see page 3, fourth line from the bottom *et seq.* in the written description for an extensive description of the air bubbles and their advantageous effects they provide the instant invention.

Spray-drying the slurry also results in unexpectedly advantageous characteristics such as in solubility over non-spray-dried slurries. Spray-drying allows the slurry to be uniformly distributed to increase the desired feature of the invention. Moreover, spray-drying leads to distinct differences at the point where the detergent layer includes the particle group obtained by spray-drying making it more water-soluble more rapidly as discussed above. Thus, there are real physical differences between the claimed invention and the inventions of EP '191 and JP '593.

Thus, although spray-drying the slurry is a process limitation, this process limitation leads to physical differences between the instant invention and the cited art. Thus, for this reason, spray-drying the slurry should be read

into the claim. Please see *Atlantic Thermoplastics Co. v. Faytex Corporation*, 23 USPQ2d 1481 (Fed. Cir. 1992).

Accordingly, Applicants assert that the Examiner has failed to make out a proper case of obviousness with regard to the 35 USC §103(a) rejection over Ingram '191 and JP '593. Withdrawal of the rejections is warranted and respectfully requested.

With the above remarks and amendments, it is believed that the claims, as they now stand, define patentable subject matter such that passage of the instant invention to allowance is warranted. A Notice to that effect is earnestly solicited.

If any questions remain regarding the above matters, please contact Applicant's representative, T. Benjamin Schroeder (Reg. No. 50,990), in the Washington metropolitan area at the phone number listed below.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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